

Climbing Back Up When Pride Makes You Tumble

Devotionals for the Humbled and Broken Places

By Sharon Stults

When We Desperately Need God to Draw Near

Though the LORD is great, he cares for the humble, but he keeps his distance from the proud, Psalm 138:6 NLT.

Sometimes things blow up bigly in our lives because we ignore the prodding of the Holy Spirit and warnings of family and friends. Samson ignored his parent's warnings about who to marry and how to conduct himself. Look how all of that turned out. We take a job we shouldn't or marry a person we shouldn't or bind ourselves to a cause or organization that isn't what we convince ourselves it is. Or we ignore health issues or relationship problems. *Pride stops us from hearing those who love us most especially God.*

After we realize things are going sideways and we are surrounded by the wreckage of our bodies or our home or ministry or whatever, we have a choice. We can choose victimhood or the humility path. Sometimes we still resist this path. We don't admit that others were right, and we were wrong. We shut people out of our pain because we are too embarrassed that we were so wrong about something or someone. Worse yet, we can shut God out of our pain and disappointment.

The only healthy way out of a pride fall is true humility. God does not draw near those who still won't listen or who proudly wear the victim badge. He draws near to the humble. If you are trying to recover from a broken situation, first own whatever part of it is your fault. Second, get on your face before God if you haven't already. Listen to what he says about your situation and do whatever he tells you to do. His instructions come in many ways. Those quiet nudges in your heart during your prayer time. The wise counsel of a friend or family member. A special verse. That right-on-target-for-you sermon. A Bible study or even a prophetic word or dream. Humble yourself before God and he will draw near. He will untangle your messes and heal your soul.

God, I know that I own part of this mess I'm in. Forgive me for ignoring you and others whom you sent to advise me or warn me. Restore me. Heal me. Teach me. Set me back on the path you chose for me. In Jesus name-

When the Consequences Are Hard

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere, James 3:17 NIV.

My husband Ken and I went directly from seminary to our first ministry position. All the income my job earned during Ken's grad school years went to everyday bills and his education. When we arrived in our new town we needed to continue renting since we had no money set aside for a down payment on a house. After a year renting, we grew restless and embarrassed. Everyone else our age in the church, owned homes. We chose to ignore the fact that everyone else didn't go to grad school. Our friends and family gently advised us against buying a house without a down payment. They also urged us to wait because it was the 80's and home interest rates were 15%. Not kidding. The two of us blew through all that and found some friends to loan us a down payment. What seemed like a small, low-priced house turned into a high-priced monthly payment, hovering between a third and half of our monthly income. When we left that church three years later, our next post featured a free parsonage. We breathed a sigh of relief, but God said, "Not so fast." It took us a full year to sell our first house. Our budget was strained horribly, and this created tremendous stress in our marriage. About six months in, we recognized that God allowed us to feel the pain of a prideful, foolish choice. Knowing that didn't make the pain much better but it certainly was very humbling. Our new home was spacious, but we couldn't afford any new furniture, so half the rooms remained empty. We also couldn't afford to eat out, buy new clothes or take a vacation until that house sold.

If we had used even this one verse from James as a filter for this decision, we wouldn't have bought the house. God's wisdom is pure. Our motives were selfish. God's wisdom is peaceable and gentle. Our obsession with finding a house was frantic and stress filled. God's wisdom is open to reason. People tried to reason with us, and we refused to listen. God's wisdom is full of mercy and good fruits. If that had been the time for us to buy a house, God would have brought good fruits from that purchase. Instead, our budget was upside down. The good fruit came later as we learned our lessons during the year it didn't sell.

God will use your broken situation to demonstrate his love and mercy and build your character. God's mercy was evident in his provision of a parsonage, a peaceful, large house with no mortgage. If we had to buy our own home at the second church, I cannot imagine what would have happened to our finances. God will bring his mercy to your broken situation even as he's allowing you to learn your lessons. He's not and "I told you so," God. He's a "I love you no matter what," God. Can you point out ways he's already been merciful to you in this broken time? Except more mercy to show up as needed. He's got a limitless supply.

God, I need your mercy in my broken places right now. I'm raw and wounded and I know I've made mistakes. Teach me what you want me to know so I don't make the same mistake again. Hold me together through this painful season until this winter is over and spring comes again.

When the Climb Back Up is Taking Too Long

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak, Isaiah 40:29 NIV.

Reassembling a life broken by the results of poor decisions we and others make is grueling. There are no easy fixes most of the time even though we crave something that feels normal or balanced. Sometimes the consequences of prideful decisions last for years and we can become disheartened. Nebuchadnezzar lived like an animal for years because of his pride. No matter what consequences you might be experiencing, they cannot cancel out the promises of God. God tells us in several scriptures that he is our strength when we are tapped out. (Psalm 73:26, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Matthew 11:28-30, Psalm 147:3) I think this is some of the good fruit that God produces us when we are trying to climb up out of a pride pit. Our strength will fail, and we learn that his doesn't. Tenacity and patience are also developed to a greater degree as we wait for God to reassemble the broken pieces of our situation into something new. Now having said all that, maybe today you're just hanging on to the side of the hole with your fingernails and you're thinking of letting go. Do not. Look at the incredible ministry Peter had after his colossal failure. His pride was too embarrassed to admit he even knew Jesus. Yet repentance, humility and God's restoration led him to be one of the founding fathers of the church. God still has important destiny for you too even though you may feel like nothing but broken pottery today. Take heart. God takes broken pottery and turns them into beautiful mosaics if we will let him.

God I'm weary and tired. I'm so tired of _____ (list here, honestly, the things that are wearing you down and making you want to quit). In the best part of me I still want to be used by you in the kingdom. Give me greater patience and perseverance as you work your restoration in me and around me. I'm available Lord for anything you want me to do, even in my brokenness.